

Executive Summary

As a result of the passage of Nebraska legislative bill (LB) 692 in 2001, Nebraska created a network of local public health departments that covers each of the 93 counties within the state. Currently, many of the departments are building capacity, and subsequently are in need of quality local data to plan and evaluate their public health programs.

To better understand the health status and health behaviors of Nebraska adults within the state's local public health department regions, several Nebraska Health and Human Services System programs partnered to fund a telephone survey of Nebraska adults. The survey, conducted between October 2004 and June 2005, included 117 questions covering a variety of health topics. The sample was stratified to collect representative data from each of the 18 LB 692 funded departments (with Scotts Bluff and Dakota Counties being pulled into their respective department districts).

This report is intended primarily to be useful for health professionals at the local level; however, it can benefit those at the state level as well. Public health professionals, key stakeholders, and decision makers can use the information in this report to increase awareness of the need to focus on health prevention, to better plan and evaluate public health efforts, to identify regional differences across the state, and to strengthen state and local grant applications.

Summary of the key state level findings:

- For most of the health topics presented within this report, there was little difference (beyond age) between the individual departments and the state as a whole; suggesting that general health and health behaviors of Nebraska residents vary little with respect to local public health department region.
- Health topics that showed the greatest variation across departments included health insurance coverage, distance to emergency medical care, cholesterol screening, exposure to secondhand smoke at work, frequency of eating restaurant and fast food, alcohol consumption, seatbelt use, dental visits, and traffic safety within neighborhoods.
- Beyond differences in age, the local department residents that compared unfavorably to residents statewide (across the health indicators in this report) included those in Loup Basin, North Central, Northeast, South Heartland, Southeast, Southwest, and West Central.
- The local department residents that compared favorably to residents statewide included those in: Four Corners, Lincoln-Lancaster, and Sarpy/Cass.

Unfortunately, a complete synopsis of findings within each of the 18 departments was not possible to convey in an executive summary. The most useful component of this report, especially for health professionals working in local communities, is the department-specific narrative and summary tables. By compiling the information such that each department has its own synopsis of its residents' health status, relative to residents statewide, health professionals will have easy access to local level data.

Within this document, there is a narrative summary presented for each of the 18 health departments along with a detailed table of findings. The findings present information on how each department compares to the state overall and by gender for each of the 55 health indicators presented. In addition, the appendices within this report contain results that allow for comparison across departments beyond differences in age among residents.